

SERVICE

Heading across the street
from the construction site
to Mickey D's for lunch,
I notice a guy kneeling on the sidewalk
in the ninety-degree heat,
his head bowed, almost touching the ground.
I figure he's a Muslim
until I see the blood coming
from his nose.
I sprint past him and through
the doors raising my hand to a girl
behind the counter.
An old skin-and-bones man is saying,
"Give me a cheeseburger," as he lays
his change on the counter and starts to count it.
"And I don't want one of them cold dried-up
sons-of-bitches either."
The girl smiles at me and says,
"Can I help you?"
"There's a guy outside bleeding on the sidewalk,"
I tell her. "Just a minute," she says, and then,
looking over my shoulder at a fat woman behind me,
says, "Ma'am, can I take your order?"

HIGH & ROSE

I'm standing at the bar
drinking a beer, minding
my own business.
A guy a couple of stools
down is staring at me.
He looks like a cross
between Charlie Manson
and a monkey.
"Are you a narc?" he says
when I look over at him.
"No, I'm not a narc," I say.
"Well, you could be," he replies,
"you've got short hair like a cop."
"Look, man," I say,
glancing over at the bartender
and rolling my eyes,
"if I were a narc, I'd look
just like you."

That's how they work.
They drink beer with you,
smoke your dope,
eat your old lady's cooking
and play with your kids.
Then they turn you in
and look down their nose at you
when your stupid ass
is dragged off to jail."
He looks at me for a moment
with a vacant expression
and says, "You wanna go outside
and burn one?"

EXORCISM

I'm living in this roach-
infested broiler oven
down in central Florida.
There's a fool
next door who's either
praying out in the hall
with one of the brethren
from his fundamentalist church
or waking me up at 3 or 4
in the morning screaming
at his wife about how
she's fucking up her life.
Her parents came by today
while he was at work.
They took her, the baby
and a few of her things
and drove off.
He trashed the apartment
when he found them gone
and cried and carried on
something pitiful
when the cops hauled
his ass off to jail.
The old man who lives below
laughed and yelled
as they pulled away,
"The Lord works in mysterious ways."